

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN BOB GOODLATTE  
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET  
REGARDING THE BUDGET RESOLUTION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2002  
MARCH 8, 2001

I thank the Chairman and the members of the Committee for the opportunity to appear before the Budget Committee today to share with you several items that I believe deserve priority in the FY 2002 budget.

First, I want to express my support for full funding for the Rural Utilities Service within the Agriculture Department, specifically for the administration of the loan guarantee program enacted last fall to address the inability of many of our constituents in rural and smaller communities to receive their local network television signals over satellite.

The loan guarantee program will enable consumers outside the top 40 television markets (there are 211) to receive this "local-into-local" service. Since enactment of the Satellite Home Viewers Act over a year ago, consumers outside the top 40 markets have expressed their desire for this legislation to make available to them 'local-into-local' technology. I know my office received thousands of letters and calls from constituents concerned about this issue. This new law, when supplemented by the loan guarantee program, will allow satellite providers to become more effective competitors to cable operators who have been able to provide local over-the-air broadcast stations to their subscribers for years. It will also benefit American consumers in markets where local TV via satellite is made available by offering them full service digital television at an affordable price.

The bill is crucial for Americans in rural and smaller markets who rely on their local television stations for news, politics, weather, sports, and emergency information. Local television is often the only lifeline folks have in cases of natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, blizzards, earthquakes, or flooding. The bill's language to encourage the delivery of local television signals to these constituents in America will not only benefit consumers, it will save lives.

Next, I would like to discuss Congress' efforts to combat crimes committed over the Internet. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected and reliant upon global telecommunications structures to provide these connections, a new vector for criminal activity has arisen.

That is why I support increased spending levels for programs that provide funding to investigate and prosecute individuals who commit illegal acts over the Internet. Recent events have brought to light the serious problems surrounding security on the Internet. With an increasing number of consumers corresponding, conducting business, and shopping online, it is critical that all Americans maintain their confidence to use the Internet as a means to live their daily lives.

By providing law enforcement officials with the tools they need to combat the burgeoning problem of cyber-crime, Congress can help ensure that consumers and businesses will be protected and the Internet will continue to grow at its current pace. Congress has the opportunity to provide law enforcement officers with the tools they need to prosecute these crimes, and we should not merely blink our collective eyes at this issue.

Therefore, I encourage you to strengthen resources for the government to investigate and prosecute crimes committed over the Internet.

And lastly, I want to express my support for full funding -- \$750 million -- for a new sewer overflow control grant program which was authorized in the Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY 2001.

The new law authorizes a \$1.5 billion grant program to help local communities upgrade and improve their wastewater collection and treatment systems. The two-year grant program will be administered by the Environmental Protection Agency, and is triggered by a \$1.35 billion appropriation to the Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund program for wastewater treatment facilities. Grants will be awarded to facilitate the implementation of both combined sewer overflow and sanitary sewer overflow control programs, and the federal share will be at least 55 percent. Priority consideration will be given to communities that have already invested local resources into their sewer improvement programs as well as financially distressed communities.

The condition of our nation's wastewater collection and treatment facilities is alarming. In its 1996 Clean Water Needs Survey, the EPA estimates that nearly \$140 billion will be needed over the next 20 years to address wastewater infrastructure problems in our communities. In March 1999, the EPA revised its figures upwards, with infrastructure needs now estimated at \$200 billion. Other independent studies indicate that EPA has undershot the mark, estimating that these incredible unmet needs exceed \$300 billion over 20 years. Put simply, we are talking about a new generation of municipal water quality infrastructure.

Given the great need in our nation for wastewater infrastructure improvements, I believe the federal government has a responsibility to assist communities that are trying to fix their problems and comply with federal water quality mandates. I strongly encourage you to include full funding for the new sewer overflow grant program which has already been authorized.

Again, I thank the Committee for allowing me to testify before you today.

